

What are the Economic Effects of moving the Library?

The Sebastopol Commons project should be evaluated based on the stated goals of the project taken from their own project documents -

The project is intended to be:

“a centralized hub that blends civic economic, cultural and social resources to foster engagement **and economic vitality.**”

“located in historic downtown Sebastopol”

“a catalyst for economic development in the downtown corridor.”

The Commons committee made a strong argument that the library contributes to the economic vitality of downtown. What is the economic impact of moving it to the O'Reilly building at the northern end of town.

Estimates from various reports on library usage suggest 160,000-200,000+ annual visits. This makes the library a significant downtown traffic generator. The library appears to be the number 2 attraction behind the Barlow which claims 935,400 visits. So, the library creates up to 1/5 the foot traffic reported for the entire Barlow. What is the economic effect?

Without an economic study, we can only do a sensitivity analysis.

Assume 33% of visits include taking advantage of the visit to town to buy groceries, grab coffee, eat in a restaurant or visit an art gallery or a retail shop.

$162,000 \times 33\% =$ about 53,500 secondary downtown visits/year

Average Spending	Annual Downtown Revenue
\$10	\$535,000
\$15	\$803,000
\$20	\$1.07 million
\$30	\$1.61 million

The city has struggled to revive the growth in sales tax revenue since COVID. Moving the library appears to contradict the stated goal of making a new library “a catalyst for economic development in the downtown corridor”. It may in fact have the opposite effect, lowering downtown visitors and driving down economic activity.